

LOBUND Institute

... for research in the life sciences

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

JAMES A. REYNIERIS
DIRECTOR

June 9, 1958

Professor Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
University of Wisconsin
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Dear Professor Lederberg:

I enjoyed your presentation at the Satellite Conference very much and was most disappointed that you had to leave before your paper could be discussed. The opportunities presented by space craft are certainly most challenging.

It seems to me there is no danger of contaminating the moon with terrestrial living organisms by means of hard landing probes. If flying and crawling insects are excluded, the organisms involved will be limited to the dust and finger prints on the probe. It seems most unlikely than any of these few organisms could survive the heat of the explosive landing. If so, they would be distributed as inert particles with the rest of the debris and their course plotted by the physical scientists. Chemical and radioactive contamination as you pointed out is certainly a real hazard that must be considered.

Since the launching of space craft is so complex at present, it would seem necessary to evaluate carefully the advantages of sterility before further complicating the procedure. A satisfactory coring technic should provide pure samples even with surface contamination.

Perhaps our experience with sterile environments for the rearing of "germfree" animals has made us aware of the limitations of living organisms as contaminating agents. I am sure you have considered these points but thought you might be interested in our viewpoint.

A copy of this letter has been sent to Dr. Porter because I discussed this problem with him after one of the sessions.

Sincerely,



P. C. Trexler
Associate Professor

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